

Running head: Preventive Behavioral Strategies

Classroom Management Strategies for Students with Autism

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Abstract

Classroom management strategies designed to improve problem behavior directly affect student achievement. Researchers have demonstrated positive behavior supports (PBS) can reduce problem behavior. However, researchers have also found evidence that PBS may not always be successful and further studies are needed to improve the use of PBS as a classroom management strategy for the most severe problem behaviors in the public school setting. The researcher studied the beliefs of teachers in a center-based program for students with autism spectrum disorder using a four-level Likert Scale consisting of eleven statements regarding the use of PBS strategies. An analysis of the results indicates teachers agree positive behavior supports can reduce, and in some cases, eliminate problem behavior.

Chapter I:

Problem Statement

Classroom management strategies are an integral part of each teacher's skill set. Most educators would agree that having the tools to manage classroom behavior could impact their ability to teach and students' ability to learn. Some researchers have found classroom management strategies such as positive behavioral supports can enhance student behavior so effective learning can take place. Others suggest the use of preventive behavioral strategies such as PBS can impede student behavior from escalating to a degree of acting out that otherwise may require more restrictive or traditional types of behavioral interventions. Even though PBS is generally a successful strategy, it may not always change students' behavior. Are additional or alternative interventions necessary to provide a safe environment?

Elements of the Problem

The purpose of education is to provide a safe environment and facilitate the learning of all students. However, we must realize that every learning environment is not alike. Therefore, preventive behavioral strategies that are effective in some settings may not be effective in other settings. The effectiveness of preventive behavioral strategies may be enhanced if additional behavioral interventions are in place to supplement positive behavior supports. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates public educators meet the needs of every child in the public school setting, including the needs of children with disabilities. A problem exists when preventive behavioral interventions are applied but dangerous behaviors continue and the safety of the acting out student or other students is compromised. Therefore, this researcher will study the level of agreement teachers have regarding whether reduction strategies should be considered as a behavioral intervention tool

for children with autism in situations in which preventive strategies alone are not effective. It is important to clarify that PBS interventions should be implemented first. By design, PBS is structured to teach students the skills necessary to manage their own behavior. Reduction behavioral interventions remove the reinforcers that may precede problem behavior. Since reduction strategies are more restrictive than PBS, they should only be implemented after less restrictive strategies have been attempted.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative, action-based study is to examine to what extent teachers agree the preventive behavioral strategy of PBS is effective in the classroom management of students with autism spectrum disorder. Research shows a strong relationship between effective classroom management and positive student behavior, but little research exists with regard to what alternative or additional interventions may be needed for classrooms that serve students with the most challenging behaviors. The research cited by this researcher indicates the use of preventive behavioral interventions is highly effective in improving student behavior. On the other hand, none of the research found PBS to be efficient at changing problem behavior in all cases. Research data on the use of PBS is limited in the sense that little information exists with regard to what alternatives or interventions are recommended when PBS alone is not generating positive behavioral change. Further study is needed to address the efficacy of PBS at the secondary (classroom) and tertiary (individual) levels. A question that needs to be considered is what can be done when positive behavior interventions do not achieve a reduction in problem behaviors that are disruptive or dangerous?

Definition of Terms

Although several definitions for Positive Behavior Support (PBS) were found within the literature the following definition of Positive Behavior Support was chosen for this study because it clearly states the intent and varying levels at which PBS can be applied.

Positive Behavior Support (PBS)

Carr, et al. (2002) states,

PBS is an applied science that uses educational methods to expand an individual's behavior repertoire and systems change methods to redesign an individual's living environment to first enhance the individual's quality of life and, second, to minimize his or her problem behavior (p. 4).

Positive behavior supports are designed to create safe and effective schools. PBS focuses on building the capacity of schools to teach and support positive behavior in all students by developing research-based school-wide and classroom-specific discipline systems.

Eber (2002) uses Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) in the same context as positive behavior support (PBS). He states, "PBIS is not a prescribed program but, rather, provides systems for schools to design, implement, and evaluate effective school-wide, classroom and student specific discipline plans" (p. 2).

Reduction Behavioral Strategies

The Wayne County Regional Educational Service Agency (2003) defines reduction strategies as "a planned response or consequence to the problem behavior that will reduce or eliminate the reinforcement the student receives for the behavior, resulting in a weakening of the problem behavior" (p. 77). Exclusion time-out and seclusion time-out are forms of reduction behavioral interventions. Exclusion time-out is defined as the removal of a student

from a classroom or scheduled instructional activity. This intervention can prevent significant disruption to the teaching situation, but may also defuse acting-out episodes and decrease future problem behavior. Seclusion time-out is defined as the removal of a student to an approved time-out area from which the student's exit is prevented. Seclusion time-out must only be used to prevent behavior that is a danger to the student, to others, or to prevent significant property destruction.

Autism Spectrum Disorder

The Autism Society of America (2006) states,

Autism is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life and is the result of a neurological disorder that affects the normal functioning of the brain, impacting development in the areas of social interaction and communication skills. Both children and adults with autism typically show difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication, social interactions, and leisure or play activities. One should keep in mind however, that autism is a spectrum disorder and it affects each individual differently and at varying degrees.

Research Questions

Based on the review of current literature, there is evidence that positive behavioral interventions and supports can allow a teacher to maintain classroom behaviors. However, the literature does not suggest that all inappropriate behavior can be managed when PBS strategies are applied. Therefore, the survey statements posed in this study reflect to what level teachers agree that;

1. PBS can improve student behavior in a classroom for students with autism spectrum disorder.

2. PBS can improve student behavior in a classroom for students with autism spectrum disorder in all behavioral circumstances.
3. PBS can reduce or eliminate the use of reduction-based behavior interventions in a classroom for students with autism spectrum disorder.
4. Behavioral strategies such as reduction-based interventions should be available to educators when PBS is not successful.

Chapter II

Literature Review

A literature review of the keywords *positive behavior support (PBS)*, *reduction behavioral interventions*, and *autism spectrum disorder* yielded a considerable amount of research material. A keyword search of the term *positive behavior support* yielded the most literature. A keyword search of the term *reduction behavioral interventions or autism spectrum disorder* produced lesser numbers of articles, books, and abstracts. Combining all the keywords yielded an even smaller number of documents. In addition to the Internet the following databases were accessed for this literature review; Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), and ProQuest. Research provided valuable documentation regarding the efficacy of positive behavioral supports. There was little literature describing what alternative strategies were considered, if any, when PBS did not achieve the desired outcomes of improving student behavior. As Durand and Rost (2005) state, we are able to say that PBS works. However, we must clarify under what conditions PBS is effective and under what conditions it is less effective. By identifying these conditions, future PBS techniques can become more successful. This literature review supports that direction.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) directs Individual Educational Plan team members to consider the use of PBS in meeting the behavioral needs that impact a child's learning or a child's behavior that impacts the education of others [Section 614 (d)(3)(B)]. IDEA may also require a functional behavioral assessment (FBA). An FBA is designed to meet the specific and unique needs of a child. The

U. S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) supports the use of PBIS and FBA as effective tools in helping students with challenging behaviors (Warger, 1999).

Positive Behavior Supports

As cited in the Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) web site (<http://www.pbis.org/schoolwide.htm>), PBIS is a

“behaviorally-based systems approach to enhance the capacity of schools, families, and communities to design effective environments that improve the link between research-validated practices and the environments in which teaching and learning occurs. Attention is focused on creating and sustaining primary (school-wide), secondary (classroom), and tertiary (individual) systems of support that improve lifestyle results (personal, health, social, family, work, recreation) for all children and youth by making problem behavior less effective, efficient, and relevant, and desired behavior more functional”.

PBIS can be applied at three varying levels; 1) primary (school wide), 2) secondary (classroom), 3) tertiary (individual). The focus of this research will be on the classroom and individual levels. Quoting the PBIS web site (<http://www.pbis.org/schoolwide.htm>)

“Unlike traditional behavioral management, which views the individual as the problem and seeks to “fix” him or her by quickly eliminating the challenging behavior, positive behavioral support (PBS) and functional analysis (FA) view systems, settings, and lack of skills as part of the “problem” and works to change those”.

This approach is a long-term strategy designed to reduce inappropriate behavior, and teach appropriate, alternative or replacement behavior. The theory behind PBIS is that it facilitates the behavioral team in understanding the function or purpose of inappropriate behaviors.

Warger (1999) identified the following actions, which many teachers already employ in their preventive classroom management techniques:

- 1) responding to the individual student's preferences, strengths, and needs
- 2) altering the environment by creating individualized work areas for student's that may be auditory or visually hypersensitive
- 3) teach alternative skills that allow a student to appropriately get their needs met
- 4) genuinely acknowledge positive behaviors by reinforcing all positive behaviors consistently.

In a case study of a three year, six month old male diagnosed with autism, Buschbacher and Fox (2003) identified positive behavioral intervention as being highly effective in minimizing this child's tantrum behavior. The child, exhibiting behaviors such as intense and prolonged tantrums, disrupted family life in addition to interfering with the child's ability to respond to instruction and therapy in a school setting. Several challenging behaviors were exhibited across all environments. The child engaged in dropping to the floor, screaming, flailing arms and legs, and aggression toward others. Aggression is identified as hair pulling, biting, and scratching. This child also engaged in self-injurious behavior such as hand biting, and head banging. The intervention plan included a team-based approach consisting of the child's parents, the teacher, an early interventionist, a speech-language pathologist and an occupational therapist. This team performed a functional assessment and developed a hypothesis and comprehensive behavior support plan. As an on-going process, the interventionist coached the parents and other team members and the team discussed effectiveness and modifications to the intervention as needed. Six months later, Buschbacher and Fox (2003) reported that not only were tantrums minimized, the child readily sought out

and used visual cues such as schedules and choice boards, increased verbal requests, engaged in simple dramatic play with others and participated in an increased number of community-based activities. In summary, PBS can offer a highly effective approach for addressing challenging behavior in young children. They also note that PBS is not the only intervention that should be used for young children with autism.

Functional Behavior Assessment

Functional behavioral assessment (FBA) is essential to the efficacy of PBS. Sugai and Horner (2002) state that functional behavioral assessment is a problem-solving process conducted to a) collect data, b) develop a hypothesis, and c) develop and implement efficient and relevant behavior intervention plans. Scott and Caron (2005), in their review of functional behavioral assessment, state that the concepts of FBA- prediction, function and prevention- are constant, while the form of FBA may vary depending significantly on the focus. In other words, FBA focusing on school-wide issues may be more general than predictions of individual student behavior problems and functions. Therefore, they conclude that FBA at the individual student level will be more time-consuming and intensive.

Behavior Intervention Plans

Sugai and Horner (2002) define a behavior intervention plan as a) based on information from the functional behavioral assessment, b) focused on the strengths and important social contexts of the student and family, and c) one that renders problem behavior inefficient and irrelevant, so desirable or alternative behaviors emerge. Scott and Caron (2005) add that function-based behavior planning must involve the teaching of more appropriate ways for the student to achieve desired outcomes. For example, a student may be taught to point to a

picture card instead of utilizing less desirable behaviors like tantrums, to get his or her needs met.

A review of positive behavior supports research by Durand and Rost (2005) bring to the surface a number of critical questions regarding the efficacy of PBS. They state the use of PBS clearly illustrates progress in increasing positive behavior, but it may be time to take a closer look at this success. They ask, “despite a rather impressive number of studies in this area, are approaches that fall under the term positive behavior support (PBS) effective for everyone?” (p. 2) The research needs to meet certain standards. One such standard involves a clear idea about the population examined and the conditions under which PBS was successful. Clearly identifying such standards as the population and conditions under which PBS is tested will improve knowledge about the effectiveness of PBS. Also, since the individual’s family and behavioral team is so significant to the whole PBS process, do their characteristics impact success? In conclusion, Durand and Rost (2005) state behavior analysis research in general, and PBS research more specifically, empirically tests these outcomes. In order to provide more convincing proof of the efficacy of such approaches, future research needs to attend to group design, including the selection process and attrition. Even though positive behavior support is effective in facilitating positive behavioral change, a clearer understanding of the population(s) studied and the conditions that treatment works best is greatly needed.

Problem Behavior

Buschbacher and Fox (2003) describe problem behavior as behavior that interferes with a student’s ability to respond to instruction. They can be described as tantrums involving dropping to the floor, screaming, flailing arms and legs, aggression such as hair pulling, biting, and scratching, and self-injurious behavior such as hand biting, and head banging.

Summary of Literature Review

The literature review clearly identifies positive behavior support (PBS) as providing a substantial behavioral strategy that can improve student behavior in an entire school setting, in a classroom, and for individual students with challenging behavioral problems. What the research on positive behavior supports does not clearly tell us is under what specific circumstance did research take place and under what scientific dimensions were the results calculated? Durand and Rost (2005) are concerned about how researchers in the PBS field selected participants. They also inquire how participant drop out was handled. In a review of PBS studies during a 34-year period (1968-2001), Durand and Rost (2005) found that only 26% mentioned how participants were selected and included in the research and fewer studies mentioned if procedures were used to reduce selection bias. In addition, this researcher did not find research on PBS indicating at what rate problem behaviors decreased, and what behavior intervention changes, if any occurred when problem behaviors did not decrease. There are students in the public school setting that present extremely challenging behaviors that are not only a danger to themselves, but also compromise the safety of other students and the caregivers that are responsible for providing a safe school environment. PBS is a powerful and proactive behavioral process and has been demonstrated to effectively change behavior. Until the PBS process takes effect, how do educators safely intervene with students that display aggressive behaviors such as hitting, kicking, biting, head butting, use objects as weapons, or attempt to escape school grounds? Though the numbers of such students are very small, more research is needed for this population. For students that present such challenges, this researcher proposes a more detailed review of the benefits of PBS in conjunction with appropriately included reduction strategies such as exclusion time-out and seclusion time-out.

Chapter III: Methodology

Research Design

This researcher designed a survey that will be distributed to teachers in a center-based program for students with autism. The survey was designed to measure the teachers' level of agreement with statements about positive behavior supports and reduction behavior interventions as well as to assess whether they view PBS as a stand-alone classroom management strategy, or if they prefer to have reduction behavior interventions available as a strategy to support PBS in the management of problem behavior for students with autism.

Theoretical Framework

A great number of studies have investigated the benefit of using Positive Behavioral Support as a proactive, research-based behavioral intervention that has proven to be extremely effective in changing behavior (Buschbacher & Fox, 2003; Carr, et al., 2002; Eber, et al., 2002; Scott & Caron, 2005; Sugai & Horner 2002; Warger 1999). Even though research displays significant positive results with PBS, it does not provide evidence that problem behavior that is dangerous to self or others can always be safely managed without the support of reduction behavioral interventions. This research was guided by the applied behavioral theory. Advocates of PBS argue that PBS reduces the need for reduction strategies, and in most cases, may even eliminate the use of such interventions as exclusion or seclusion time-out. This researcher, agreeing with the statement PBS can reduce and in some instances eliminate the use of reduction behavioral interventions, is focusing this study on the most difficult student behaviors that may require reduction behavioral interventions in addition to preventive behavioral strategies in order to provide a safe school environment.

Sampling

This researcher used a simple random sampling to select the participants for this study. All of the classroom teachers from one of two buildings from a center-based school for students with autism were requested to complete the questionnaire. This program enrolls students aged three to twenty-six from 32 of the 34 districts within Wayne County, Michigan. Each of the twenty-one classrooms has five or fewer students and is staffed by one teacher and one teaching assistant. Currently, four classes have an additional one-on-one teaching assistant and two classes have emergency thirty-day one-on-one teaching assistants. In addition to the classroom teachers, four teachers that serve all of the students for adaptive physical education, music, art, and daily living will complete the questionnaire. These four teachers serve the students at least two times per week.

Variables

A thorough research of previous literature was performed by this researcher. The literature review facilitated the identification of the constructs. In addition to the Internet the following databases were accessed; Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), and ProQuest. The dependent variable is problem behavior. The independent variables are positive behavior support and reduction behavior interventions.

Method of Data Collection

The data were collected from surveys (Appendix A) distributed to teachers at a center-based program for students with autism. The survey was designed as a four-level Likert Scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Eleven statements comprised the survey designed to measure teacher's level of agreement with statements regarding the use of positive behavior supports and reduction behavior interventions as a classroom management

strategy. Survey responses facilitated the findings of whether teachers believe PBS can reduce or eliminate problem behavior or if reduction behavioral interventions should be available as part of a well developed behavior intervention plan if PBS alone does not reduce or eliminate problem behavior.

Data Analysis Procedures

The individual survey responses were tallied on one Excel spreadsheet for calculation of frequencies and descriptive statistics. Frequency distribution graphs for each statement provide an illustration of the results. A chart for each statement provides a numerical representation of the twenty-one responses indicating total percentages and total number responses. The information describes the level to which teachers agree that PBS is a stand-alone intervention in managing problem behavior or that reduction interventions should be available as a classroom management strategy.

Ethics and Human Relations

The risks involved in this research are minimal, but the researcher will take the following precautionary steps to ensure that each participant's safety, confidentiality, and rights will not be compromised. Each participant has been informed, their responses will remain confidential and names will not be attached as part of the research results, individual responses will not be shared or used as part of this or any other research, their participation is voluntary and they may end participation at any time. Acknowledgement and consent forms will be given to each participant prior to receiving and filling out the questionnaire (Appendices B and C). Permission has been obtained from the District's superintendent and the school's program director. A signed copy of the Human Subjects Review Committee at Marygrove College, Detroit, Michigan, and final approval letter from Patricia Kwasek,

Chairperson of the Human Subjects Review Committee (Appendix D) at Marygrove College are included.

Timeline

The study was conducted during a one-week period in November, 2006. The consent forms were distributed by directly handing the forms to the teachers or placing the forms in teacher mailboxes. Once the forms were signed and returned, the survey was distributed. Some participants placed the completed surveys in the researcher's mailbox while others handed it directly to this researcher.

Limitations

A demographic limitation exists within this study. Generalizing the results to other public school settings may be difficult since this study took place in a center-based program for students with autism. Although this researcher surveyed teachers in a center-based program for students with autism, it will be beneficial for future research to focus on a variety of students in a variety of public school settings.

Summary

A great deal of research has been conducted on the efficacy of Positive Behavioral Support. A significant amount of that research has resulted in providing a positive change in how classroom management strategies are implemented. Educators are using research validated, proactive classroom management techniques to effectively improve student behavior, which directly impacts student achievement. A benefit of PBS is that it can improve the relationship between parents and schools, as parental involvement is an integral part of PBS and children benefit by generalizing appropriate behavior in both settings, school and home. PBS is a systemic approach, incorporating a team-based structure that objectively

assesses the reasons for problem behavior, allows strategies that defuses acting-out behavior before it becomes out of control or dangerous, and teaches students to self-manage and be in control of their own behavior. On the other hand, the reality of providing a safe school environment for all participants of public education forces continued assessment and review of what should be done when preventive behavioral interventions do not manage student behavior and the safety of the student engaged in dangerous behavior and the safety of others is compromised. Behavioral interventions that incorporate the use of more restrictive interventions such as exclusion and seclusion time-out have been and continue to be an emotional and controversial subject. PBS is without doubt an effective approach and should always be implemented as a behavior management tool. It should not though, eliminate the use of reduction behavioral interventions when there is a proven, documented need for its inclusion in a well-planned behavioral intervention. It is important to add that strict guidelines, appropriate training, and documentation must always be followed in addition to involving parents in the process at all times.

Chapter IV: Survey Results

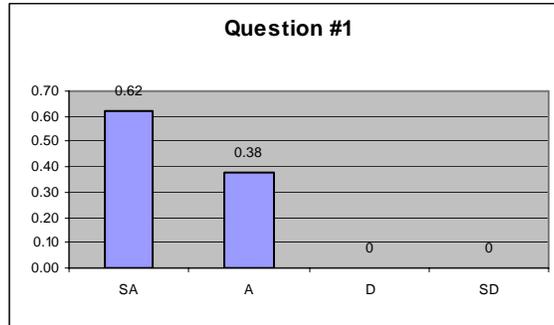
Data Analysis

Eleven statements comprised the survey distributed to twenty-five certified or emergency certified teachers in a center-based program for students with autism. Of the twenty-five surveys distributed, twenty-one were completed and returned. Previous research revealed data supports the efficiency of positive behavior supports. Survey statements were designed to assess the level of teacher's agreement with the following questions.

1. Can PBS improve student behavior in a classroom for students with autism spectrum disorder?
2. Can PBS improve student behavior in a classroom for students with autism spectrum disorder in all behavioral circumstances?
3. Can PBS reduce or eliminate the use of reduction-based behavior interventions in a classroom for students with autism spectrum disorder?
4. Should behavioral strategies such as reduction-based interventions be available to educators when PBS is not successful?

The following is a breakdown of the twenty-one responses for each of the eleven survey statements. Each of the eleven survey statements will be illustrated with a corresponding chart and graph. The charts represent total percentages and total number responses. The graphs present an illustration of the percentage response for each of the four categories of the Likert Scale (SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree).

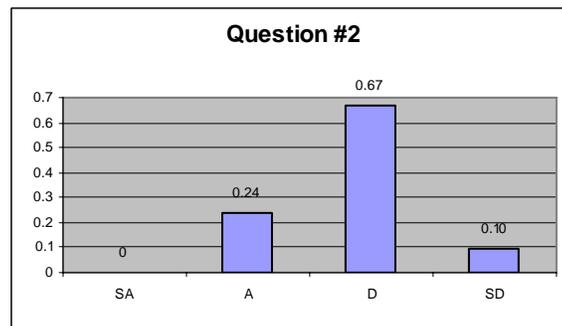
The first statement was utilized to assess to what degree teachers agreed or disagreed reinforcing acceptable behavior can improve problem behavior. (See figure 1).



Responses	Rate as %	Number
Strongly Agree	62%	n=13
Agree	38%	n=8
Disagree	0%	n=0
Strongly Disagree	0%	n=0

Figure 1

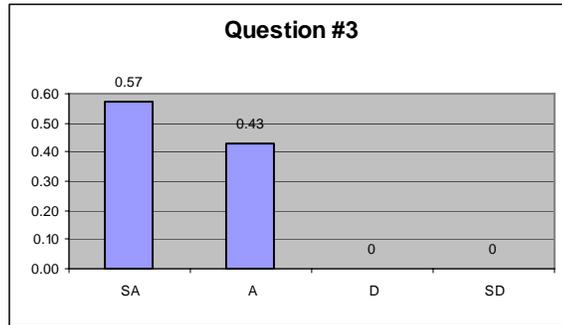
Statement one received thirteen strongly agree (62%), eight agree (38%), zero disagree, and zero strongly disagree responses. The second statement was utilized to assess to what degree teachers agreed or disagreed reinforcing acceptable behavior will eliminate problem behavior. (See figure 2).



Responses	Rate as %	Number
Strongly Agree	0%	n=0
Agree	24%	n=5
Disagree	67%	n=14
Strongly Disagree	10%	n=2

Figure 2

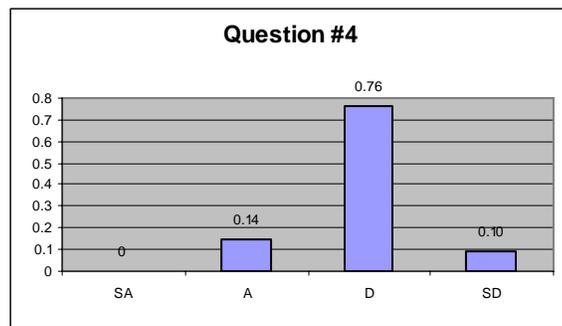
Statement two generated zero strongly agree, five agree (24%), fourteen disagree (67%), and two strongly disagree (10%) responses. The third statement was utilized to assess to what degree teachers agreed or disagreed accommodating the classroom environment can improve problem behavior. (See figure 3).



Responses	Rate as %	Number
Strongly Agree	57%	n=12
Agree	43%	n=9
Disagree	0%	n=0
Strongly Disagree	0%	n=0

Figure 3

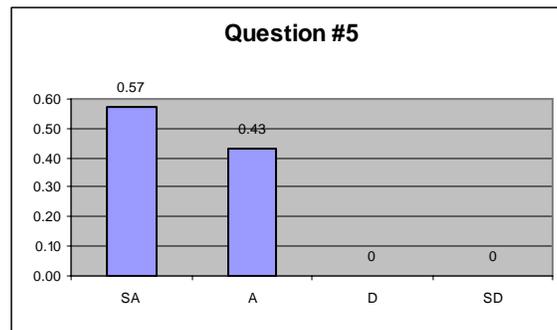
Results indicated twelve strongly agree (57%), nine agree (43%), zero disagree and zero strongly disagree responses. Statement number four was utilized to assess to what degree teachers agreed or disagreed accommodating the classroom environment will eliminate problem behavior. (See figure 4).



Responses	Rate as %	Number
Strongly Agree	0%	n=0
Agree	14%	n=3
Disagree	76%	n=16
Strongly Disagree	10%	n=2

Figure 4

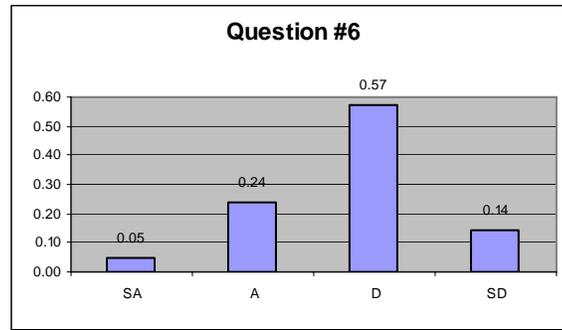
Results indicated zero strongly agree, three agree (14%), sixteen disagree (76%), and two strongly disagree (10%) responses. The fifth survey statement was utilized to assess to what degree teachers agreed or disagreed identifying a student's strengths and weaknesses can improve problem behavior. (See figure 5).



Responses	Rate as %	Number
Strongly Agree	57%	n=12
Agree	43%	n=9
Disagree	0%	n=0
Strongly Disagree	0%	n=0

Figure 5

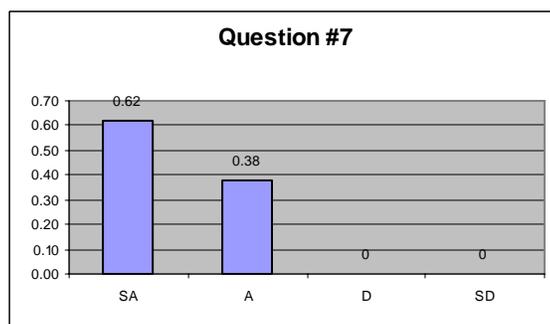
Statement five resulted in twelve strongly agree (57%), nine agree (43%), and zero disagree and strongly disagree responses. Statement number six was utilized to assess to what degree teachers agreed or disagreed identifying a student's strengths and weaknesses will eliminate problem behavior. (See figure 6).



Responses	Rate as %	Number
Strongly Agree	5%	n=1
Agree	24%	n=5
Disagree	57%	n=12
Strongly Disagree	14%	n=3

Figure 6

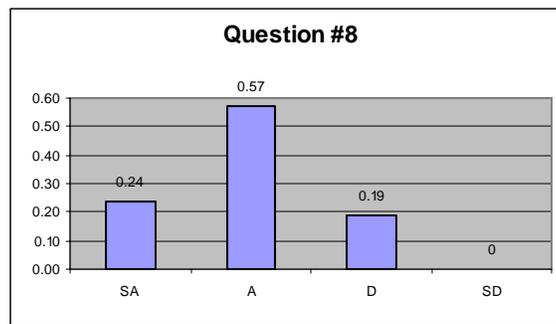
Statement six received one strongly agree (5%), five agree (24%), twelve disagree (57%), and three strongly disagree (14%) responses. The seventh statement in the survey was utilized to assess to what degree teachers agreed or disagreed that performing a functional behavioral assessment (FBA), collecting data and developing a hypothesis of the function (purpose) of problem behavior can help establish and apply appropriate positive behavior support interventions. (See figure 7).



Responses	Rate as %	Number
Strongly Agree	62%	n=13
Agree	38%	n=8
Disagree	0%	n=0
Strongly Disagree	0%	n=0

Figure 7

Results for statement seven show thirteen strongly agree (62%), eight agree (38%), zero disagree and zero strongly disagree responses. Statement eight was utilized to assess to what degree teachers agreed or disagreed when problem behavior is disruptive to the learning environment and positive behavior supports are not effective, the use of exclusion time-out (removal of a student from a classroom or scheduled instructional activity) should be used in a behavior intervention plan (BIP). (See figure 8).

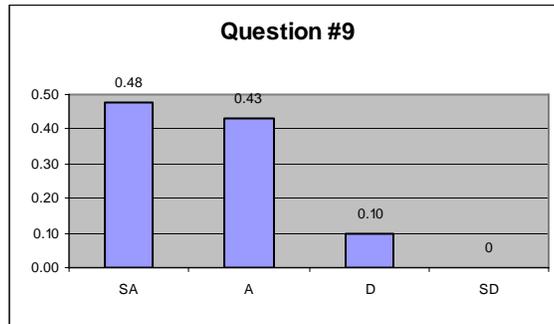


Responses	Rate as %	Number
Strongly Agree	24%	n=5
Agree	57%	n=12
Disagree	19%	n=4
Strongly Disagree	0%	n=0

Figure 8

Data for statement eight indicated five strongly agree (24%), twelve agree (57%), four disagree (19%), and zero strongly agree responses. Statement nine was utilized to assess to what degree teachers agreed or disagreed when problem behavior is a danger to the acting-out

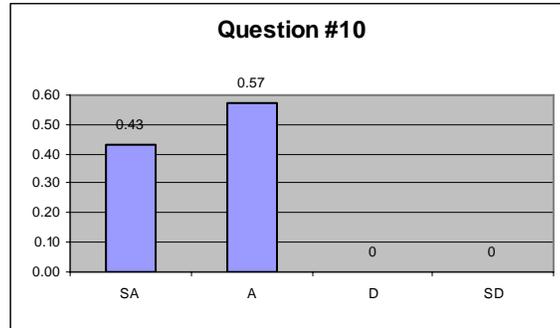
child or others and positive behavior supports are not effective, the use of seclusion time-out (removal of a student to an approved time-out area from which the student's exit is prevented) should be considered as a last resort in a behavior intervention plan (BIP). (See figure 9).



Responses	Rate as %	Number
Strongly Agree	48%	n=10
Agree	43%	n=9
Disagree	10%	n=2
Strongly Disagree	0%	n=0

Figure 9

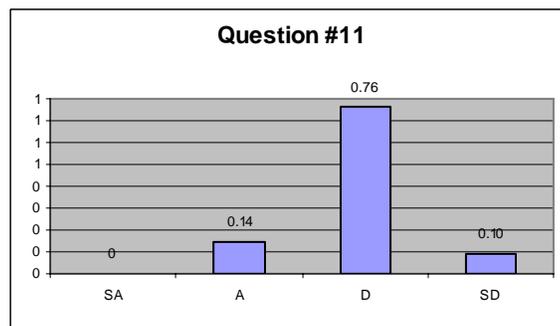
Of the twenty-one responses for statement nine, ten strongly agree (48%), nine agree (43%), two disagree (10%), and zero strongly disagree responses were calculated. The tenth survey statement was utilized to assess to what degree teachers agreed or disagreed positive behavior support (PBS) interventions such as positive reinforcement, accommodating the classroom environment, and identifying behavioral strengths and weaknesses can improve problem behavior such as aggression or self-injury. (See figure 10).



Responses	Rate as %	Number
Strongly Agree	43%	n=9
Agree	57%	n=12
Disagree	0%	n=0
Strongly Disagree	0%	n=0

Figure 10

Statement ten results indicate nine strongly agree (43%), twelve agree (57%), zero disagree and zero strongly disagree responses. Statement eleven was utilized to assess to what degree teachers agreed or disagreed positive behavior support (PBS) interventions such as positive reinforcement, accommodating the classroom environment, and identifying behavioral strengths and weaknesses will eliminate problem behavior such as aggression or self-injury. (See figure 11).



Responses	Rate as %	Number
Strongly Agree	0%	n=0
Agree	14%	n=3
Disagree	76%	n=16
Strongly Disagree	10%	n=2

Figure 11

The results for statement eleven generated zero strongly agree, three agree (14%), sixteen disagree (76%), and two strongly disagree (10%) responses.

Data Summary

This study focused on how teachers perceive the effectiveness of positive behavior supports as a classroom management strategy for children with autism. In addition, teachers were surveyed as to their beliefs regarding how effective positive behavior supports are in reducing or eliminating the use of reduction behavior interventions such as exclusion time-out and seclusion time-out. Finally, teachers were asked to consider whether they believe positive behavior supports can eliminate problem behaviors such as aggression and self-injury in all classroom management circumstances.

Research performed by this researcher demonstrated the literature clearly identifies positive behavior supports PBS as being highly effective in managing problem behavior. However, as pointed out in the literature summary, PBS was not found in any research, to provide effectiveness across all problem behavior. Even though Buschbacher and Fox (2003) identified positive behavioral intervention as being highly effective, behavioral situations still exist in which alternative behavioral interventions such as exclusion time-out or seclusion time-out may need to be considered as part of a comprehensive behavior plan.

Figures 12 and 13 illustrate total responses and total percentages for each of the eleven statements in the survey (Appendix A) respectively.

Response Totals	Questions										
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11
Strongly Agree	13	0	12	0	12	1	13	5	10	9	0
Agree	8	5	9	3	9	5	8	12	9	12	3
Disagree	0	14	0	16	0	12	0	4	2	0	16
Strongly Disagree	0	2	0	2	0	3	0	0	0	0	2

Figure 12

Responses as Percentages	Questions										
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11
Strongly Agree	62%	0%	57%	0%	57%	5%	62%	24%	48%	43%	0%
Agree	38%	24%	43%	14%	43%	24%	38%	57%	43%	57%	14%
Disagree	0%	67%	0%	76%	0%	57%	0%	19%	10%	0%	76%
Strongly Disagree	0%	10%	0%	10%	0%	14%	0%	0%	0%	0%	10%

Figure 13

Statements one, three, five and ten of the survey requested respondents to assess their level of agreement with whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with whether PBS would improve problem behavior. As displayed in the chart above, responses to survey statements one, three, five and ten;

1. Using a positive behavior support PBS strategy such as reinforcing acceptable behavior can improve problem behavior,
3. Using a positive behavior support PBS strategy such as accommodating the classroom environment can improve problem behavior,
5. Using a positive behavior support PBS strategy such as identifying a student's strengths and weaknesses can improve problem behavior,
10. Positive behavior support PBS interventions such as positive reinforcement, accommodating the classroom environment, and identifying behavioral strengths and weaknesses can improve problem behavior such as aggression or self-injury,

indicate 100% of the twenty-one respondents strongly agree or agree that positive behavior supports can improve problem behavior.

Statements two, four, and six of the survey requested respondents to assess their level of agreement to whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree that PBS can eliminate problem behavior. As displayed in the chart above, responses to survey statements two, four, and six;

2. Using a positive behavior support PBS strategy such as reinforcing acceptable behavior will eliminate problem behavior,
4. Using a positive behavior support PBS strategy such as accommodating the classroom environment will eliminate problem behavior,
6. Using a positive behavior support PBS strategy such as identifying a student's strengths and weaknesses will eliminate problem behavior,

indicate for number two, 0 % strongly agree, 24% agree, 67% disagree and 10% strongly disagree, for number four, 0 % strongly agree, 14% agree, 76% disagree and 10% strongly disagree, and for number six, 5% strongly agree, 24% agree, 57% disagree and 14% strongly disagree positive behavior supports can eliminate problem behavior. Therefore, out of the three statements, zero respondents strongly agreed that reinforcing acceptable behavior or accommodating the classroom environment will eliminate problem behavior, and one respondent strongly agreed identifying a student's strengths and weaknesses will eliminate problem behavior. Five respondents agreed to statements two and six and three respondents agreed with statement number four. Fourteen of the respondents disagreed with number two, while sixteen disagreed with number four and twelve respondents disagreed with number six. Two strongly disagree responses were recorded for number two and number four as three

respondents strongly disagreed on number six. Survey statement number seven, when performing a functional behavioral assessment FBA, collecting data and developing a hypothesis of the function (purpose) of the problem behavior can help establish and apply appropriate positive behavior support interventions generated thirteen strongly agree (62%) and eight agree (38%) responses. Therefore, 100% of respondents believe performing a functional behavioral assessment will facilitate the application of appropriate positive behavior supports. Survey statement number eight, when problem behavior is disruptive to the learning environment and positive behavior supports are not effective, the use of exclusion time-out (removal of a student from a classroom or scheduled instructional activity) should be used in a behavior intervention plan BIP generated five strongly agree (24%), twelve agree (57%), four disagree (19%) and zero strongly disagree responses. Seventeen of the twenty-one respondents believe exclusion time-out should be used in a BIP when PBS is not effective. Survey statement number nine, when problem behavior is a danger to the acting-out child or others and positive behavior supports are not effective, the use of seclusion time-out (removal of a student to an approved time-out area from which the student's exit is prevented) should be considered as a last resort in a behavior intervention plan BIP, had ten strongly agree (48%), nine agree (43%), two disagree (10%) and zero strongly disagree responses. Nineteen of the twenty-one respondents believe seclusion time-out should be considered when PBS is not effective. Survey statement number eleven, positive behavior support PBS interventions such as positive reinforcement, accommodating the classroom environment, and identifying behavioral strengths and weaknesses will eliminate problem behavior such as aggression or self-injury, had zero respondents strongly agree, three (14%) agree, sixteen (76%) disagree and two (10%) strongly disagree. Therefore, eighteen respondents believe

positive reinforcement, accommodating the classroom environment and identifying student strengths and weaknesses will not eliminate problem behaviors such as aggression or self-injury.

Chapter V:

Summary

The effectiveness of classroom management has a direct impact on student behavior. Student behavior can impact the quality of student achievement. The more effective classroom management strategies are, more effective teaching can take place and therefore better student learning can occur. Research indicates classroom management strategies such as Positive Behavioral Supports PBS can enhance student behavior so effective learning can take place. Research also suggests that the use of preventive behavioral strategies such as PBS can impede student behavior from escalating to a degree of acting out that otherwise may require more restrictive or traditional types of behavioral interventions. The purpose of education is to provide a safe environment and facilitate the learning of all students. However, we must realize that every learning environment is not alike. Therefore, preventive behavioral strategies that are effective in some settings may not be effective in other settings. Preventive behavioral interventions may benefit if additional behavioral interventions are in place to supplement PBS.

The results of this study show participants agree that positive behavior supports can improve problem behavior, reduce the use of reduction based strategies and facilitate the development of a functional behavioral assessment and a behavior intervention plan. Participants also demonstrated a strong agreement that PBS is effective most of the time, but there are times when other types of interventions such as exclusion time-out and seclusion time-out may need to be considered.

Conclusions

All participants agreed that PBS can improve and or reduce problem behavior. One participant strongly agreed that PBS can eliminate problem behavior while 21% of the respondents agreed that PBS can eliminate problem behavior based on an average of the agree responses for statement numbers two, four and six. Three respondents (14%) agreed in survey statement number eleven that PBS can eliminate problem behavior such as aggression and self-injury.

Based on the results of this survey and the review of literature regarding classroom management strategies for students with autism, positive behavior support interventions can reduce and in some cases eliminate problem behavior. Since the focus of this study is directed toward the most difficult and challenging behavior problems in a public school center-based program, a conclusion can be rendered that teacher's believe behavioral approaches other than PBS may need to be available as part of a comprehensive behavior intervention plan.

Recommendations

It is this researcher's recommendation that further research take place regarding the effectiveness of positive behavior supports as a stand alone behavioral strategy. Research needs to be carried out in a variety of school settings allowing findings to be generalized to a larger number of school environments. Case studies may provide a more detailed look at the effectiveness of PBS under specific behavioral circumstances. According to Durand and Rost (2005) researchers need to be concerned about the selection process including attrition rates. It may be true that PBS can reduce and eliminate many types of problem behavior. What happens when positive behavior support strategies require several trials before they effectively reduce or eliminate problem behavior? Individuals placed with the responsibility

of educating children with challenging behavior must continue to strive to succeed with the least restrictive interventions, but behavioral interventions such as exclusion time-out or seclusion time-out should be available under controlled circumstances. Decisions to utilize these types of reduction based behavioral interventions should always be implemented through a collaborative team of experts and most importantly include the child's parents in the decision making process. Since it has not been demonstrated that PBS can eliminate all problem behavior, other behavioral strategies should be available for individuals that display behaviors that are challenging and dangerous to the acting-out person or others.

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Appendix A

DIRECTIONS: Please read each statement completely then circle the phrase that best fits your level of agreement with the statement.

- 1) Using a positive behavior support (PBS) strategy such as reinforcing acceptable behavior can improve problem behavior.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

- 2) Using a positive behavior support (PBS) strategy such as reinforcing acceptable behavior will eliminate problem behavior.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

- 3) Using a positive behavior support (PBS) strategy such as accommodating the classroom environment can improve problem behavior.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

- 4) Using a positive behavior support (PBS) strategy such as accommodating the classroom environment will eliminate problem behavior.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

- 5) Using a positive behavior support (PBS) strategy such as identifying a student's strengths and weaknesses can improve problem behavior.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

- 6) Using a positive behavior support (PBS) strategy such as identifying a student's strengths and weaknesses will eliminate problem behavior.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Questionnaire

- 7) When performing a functional behavioral assessment (FBA), collecting data and developing a hypothesis of the function (purpose) of problem behavior can help establish and apply appropriate positive behavior support interventions.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

- 8) When problem behavior is disruptive to the learning environment and positive behavior supports are not effective, the use of exclusion time-out (removal of a student from a classroom or scheduled instructional activity) should be used in a behavior intervention plan (BIP).

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

- 9) When problem behavior is a danger to the acting-out child or others and positive behavior supports are not effective, the use of seclusion time-out (removal of a student to an approved time-out area from which the student's exit is prevented) should be considered as a last resort in a behavior intervention plan (BIP).

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

- 10) Positive behavior support (PBS) interventions such as positive reinforcement, accommodating the classroom environment, and identifying behavioral strengths and weaknesses can improve problem behavior such as aggression or self-injury.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

11) Positive behavior support (PBS) interventions such as positive reinforcement, accommodating the classroom environment, and identifying behavioral strengths and weaknesses will eliminate problem behavior such as aggression or self-injury.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Appendix B

Classroom Management Strategies for Students with Autism

Informed Consent Document

To Participants:

My name is Joe S. Valdivia. I am a graduate student at Marygrove College in the Educational Leadership program. I am asking that you consider being a volunteer for a research project I am conducting. Before you consider and I accept your participation, it is important to clearly state the following information pertaining to this project.

The purpose of this study is to determine to what extent teachers in a center-based program for students with autism use preventive behavioral interventions as a classroom management strategy. Also, the researcher will attempt to determine to what extent teachers believe that the use of preventive behavioral interventions can reduce or eliminate the use of reduction behavioral interventions when working with children with autism.

The researcher will use fictional names for all participants, and for the district itself. The researcher will assure the confidentiality of the questionnaires by maintaining these same in his possession in accord with research law. Questionnaires will be retained only by Joe S. Valdivia and will be stored in a secured and confidential location. They will not be used for any other purpose than the present course research. To this same end, risks associated with this project are expected to be minimal. It is expected that the results of this study will benefit participants by identifying data that is believed to best improve student behavior.

The investigative process for this study is structured to provide valuable information about classroom management with regard to problem behavior. It is designed to achieve this outcome with no foreseeable harm or risks to any participant. Your participation will involve responding to a questionnaire.

Your participation is strictly voluntary, there is no obligation to participate and you can withdraw at any time without prejudice. Your identity is not required and therefore will be protected at all times. Participant responses will not be singled out as part of this study. Data will only be summarized as total respondent percentages.

The confidentiality of the questionnaires will be maintained according to law. Questionnaires will be retained by Joe S. Valdivia and stored in a secured confidential location. They will not be used for any other purpose. I can be contacted at 734 762-8445 for any questions concerning this study.

Appendix C

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

I, _____ hereby state that:

1. I have read the informed consent pertaining to the study entitled, “Classroom Management Strategies for Students with Autism”
2. I have been given the opportunity to ask any question concerning this study, and those questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
3. I have been given a complete copy, with all signatures, of this document.
4. I hereby agree and consent to participate in this study.

Full Signature of Participant Date

The investigator of this research, Joe S. Valdivia, entitled, “Classroom Management Strategies for Students with Autism” I hereby state to the best of my knowledge and belief that all statements made in this consent form are true. The participant exercised free power without undue inducement or any element of force, fraud, deceit, duress, or any other form of coercion when agreeing to participate with this study. Even though participation is completely voluntary, it is clearly stated that any participant may rescind participation at any time without harm or loss of benefiting from this studies results.

Full Signature of Investigator Date

Appendix D

FINAL SUMMARY

Title of Research Project: Classroom Management Strategies for Students with Autism

Primary Investigator: Joe S. Valdivia

Date Completed: December 1, 2006

Send this form to:
Patricia Kwasek, Chair
Institutional Review Board
Liberal Arts, Library Lecture Hall 207